
Social Darwinism And Its Role In A Christmas Carol

Social Darwinism is a bias between social groups. The idea that the rich or those who have a higher quality of education are somehow better and more powerful than the poor or those who are unschooled or uncultured. There is also a misconception that the rich work harder and the poor are just lazy. One would probably find if they looked close enough that a lot of those who are poor or lower class often work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. In "A Christmas Carol" there were a few scenarios in the book that illustrated Social Darwinism of which I will discuss.

One of the first scenarios that came to mind was when Scrooge and Cratchit were at work, two businessmen stopped by to see Mr. Scrooge, and asked him if he would like to make a charitable donation to the poor. In their conversation with Mr. Scrooge they told him that "many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts" (Dickens 16). Of which Mr. Scrooge replied, "are there no prisons; and the workhouses, are they still in operation" (Dickens 16)? This response took the men by surprise, and they replied by telling Mr. Scrooge that yes, they were in operation but that "many can't go there; and many would rather die" (Dickens 16). To which Mr. Scrooge replied, "if they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus of the population" (Dickens 16). For Mr. Scrooge to insinuate that he would rather the poor just go somewhere and die than to help them, as perhaps that is just one more less mouth to feed, to me shows Social Darwinism. Mr. Scrooge looked upon the poor as lazy stating "I can't afford to make idle people merry" (Dickens 16). He did however express that he would support the establishments that the poor should go to for help but was not willing to personally give a contribution toward the individuals themselves. It seemed that Ebenezer Scrooge would rather it be someone else's problem, even though he did so very grudgingly by stating "I support the establishments, they cost me enough, and those who are badly off should go there" (Dickens 16). Mr. Scrooge could have done so much good with his money but instead chose to be greedy with it and only looked after himself and his needs instead of trying to help others.

Another scenario that stood out to me was how Mr. Scrooges treated his apprentice, Bob Cratchit. Cratchit worked very long hours for little wages. The conditions he worked under were harsh too, in that it was wintertime and the office they worked in was cold. Mr. Scrooge was very stingy with his coal and would not share enough for Cratchit to be able to stay warm while working. Mr. Scrooge was also reluctant to give Cratchit Christmas Day off stating it was "a poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December" (Dickens 18). Ebenezer Scrooge was an all-around bad boss. He worked Cratchit to the bone, didn't provide a comfortable environment of which to work, never wanted to give a holiday off and gave no appreciation for a job well done. Ebenezer Scrooge was so focused on making money that he didn't care about anyone but himself, which is a very undesirable way to live. There is a sense that the relationship that Mr. Scrooge had with his previous business partner Marley was one of an equal partnership unlike the one he had with Cratchit. Ebenezer Scrooge could have taken the opportunity to make Cratchit a friend and business partner like he had in Marley but instead he chose to take out his frustration and bitterness on him.

It wasn't until Ebenezer Scrooge was visited by the Ghost of Christmas past, present and future

that he sees just how uncaring and heartless of a person he had become, and that if he didn't start to make changes, he was going to die a lonely old man. When looking at his past, Ebenezer Scrooge undoubtedly did not feel secure and loved as a child, and this may have played a part in how he treated others. He longed for a better life and to him, money represented success and happiness but deep down he really wasn't happy at all.

In conclusion, Social Darwinism is still misconstrued in our society today just as it was in the Eighteen Hundred's. It shouldn't matter how rich or educated you are, we should still treat everyone with kindness and respect. Upper class, middle class or lower class which ever class a person falls in to, we should all strive to treat each other with love and kindness. In the end, Ebenezer Scrooge began to understand and realize that is cold demeanor and lack of compassion affected not only himself but those around him. We all have it in us to make someones life a little bit better because "everytime you do a good deed, you shine the light a little farther in the dark; and the thing is, when you're gone that light is going to keep shining on, pushing the shadow back" (Charles de lint).

Works Cited

1. Dickens, Charles. "A Christmas Carol". Prestwick House 2005
2. Charles de lint. [goodreads.com/quotes/tag/good-deeds](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/good-deeds). 2007